COUNTING THE COSTS: ETHNIC VIOLENCE VERSUS HUMAN AND CAPITAL FLIGHT FROM WUKARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Each ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria sends so many people fleeing from their homes and to loss of material possessions. Survivors flee from the areas never to return again while some others come back to start life all over again having lost all their lives' possessions. All such exoduses are accompanied by human capital flights and material capital flights that would have gone into development investments in the affected areas. This paper examines these conflicts and their costs to the victims and economies of the areas in which they occur, and their impacts to national unity and integration. The paper finds that the various ethno-religious conflicts in the country especially in the north-east and the north- central geopolitical zones in Nigeria are caused by crises of identity on the parts of the migrant settler populations who lack ethnic identities and therefore adopt religious identities in their areas of domicile; and that the crises would continue in all regions in the north with indigenous ethnic minorities until the ethnic minorities disengage themselves from the domination of the migrant settler populations. The paper recommends that the end to these ethno-religious conflicts lies in the abandonment of religious extremism and approval of inter-religious marriages between members of the various religious faiths in the country; and a stop to challenging indigenous customary and traditional practices; respect for constituted traditional authorities; and a stop to vying for traditional and political positions by settler elements in their areas of domicile.

KEYWORDS: Ethno-Religious Conflict, Ethnic Identity, Religious Identity, Migrant Settler, Crises of Idemtity

INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity is a political concept and denotes the expression of ethnic sentiments or ethnic nationalism. It involves the practice of ethnic ideology which enables a group to exploit natural differences in nationality for specific purposes. As Igwe (2002) pointed out, it is an outward-looking chauvinistic attitude towards one's nationality and cultural group with a correspondingly suspicious and hostile attitude towards others, especially those held to be in competition with one's own ethnic group.

Ethnicity manifests in the political, economic and cultural processes of a country and is propagated by the family, economic groups, and political groups in the labour process. As Nnoli (1989) noted, it is determined by the size of a linguistic group, location of the group, strength and cohesion of its leadership, the nature and leadership of under-privileged classes, foreign influences and dominant ideology.

Ethnic conflicts had been in existence in Nigeria before the advent of colonialism. Ethnic wars were fought over natural resources, farmlands, grazing lands, water supply, fishing rights, hunting rights, items of trade such as slaves, ivory, gold, etc. Later, religious beliefs and power positions became issues keenly contested in and across the length and breadth of the country, leading to wanton destruction of lives and property across the country (Ifemesia, 1965; Aderibigbe,

1965; and Tamuna, 1965).

Ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are therefore generally caused by (a) struggles over natural and economic resources by ethnic nationalities, (b) as a result of migration, and (c) state and empire building processes by ethnic nationalities (Ifemesia, 1965; Aderibigbe, 1965 and Tamuno, 1965). Some of the expansionist tendencies by some ethnic nationalities were successful in some areas, while in so many areas, they were checkmated by the ethnic militias of the invaded ethnic regions and nationalities; and by the advancement of the colonial occupation forces (Akpofuru and Crowther, 1965).

Most ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are outcomes of foreign influences – colonization and unification of disparate peoples around the River Niger area into a country by the British colonial forces without due consideration for their ethnic diversities (Balewa, 1948); western education which led to social mobilization and the creation of new social classes or what Deutsch (1961) called the "new marginal men", and whom Nnoli (1989) referred to as "educated and insecure elites" who have resorted to organizing collective ethnic support to ensure their successes in the competition for national posts and resources because they have either failed to achieve, or, the available national institutions have failed to accommodate them and their ethnic interests.

The same social mobilization via education created what Nnoli (1989) has called "middlemen minorities" who took advantage of the unification of the various ethnic nationalities into a country called Nigeria, to venture out of their ethnic regions for business ventures (this is particularly true of the Ibo ethnic group in Nigeria. (There is a popular saying that wherever you do not find an Ibo-man, no one is there. - just leave the region). In their host ethnic regions, they became ethnic minorities and targets for all forms of ethnically motivated attacks because of their business acumen.

Finally, ethnic conflicts are endemic and rampant in the country because of the multiplicity of ethnic groups in the country. It is estimated that Nigeria has more than 400 ethnic nationalities and linguistic groups (Murdock, 1959). This is too much for a single country. It is extremely difficult to have 400 or more ethnic nationalities under a roof without conflicts each day. With the multiplicity of ethnic nationalities in the country, it is extremely difficult to achieve a "unity in diversity".

Nigeria is not a country; it is merely a geographical expression (Awolowo, 1946; 1966). It is evident that ethnic conflicts in Nigeria took a national outlook with the formation of the Nigerian state by the British. Simply put, it was the colonization of Nigeria that halted state formation processes in the present day Nigeria, and set the stage for ethnic conflicts which have characterized the country's political processes and militated against the development of stable democratic governance in the country. Ethnicity has bsecome a potent force in politics. It was the basis for the formation of nationalist movements during colonial era in Nigeria (Coleman, 1963), and the basis for political party formation, membership and support (Sklar, 1963).

The various governments in Nigeria have adopted varying measures to combat ethnic conflicts in the country, and most of these measures have not been effective hence the persistence of the problem in the country especially during political and regime transition periods. The measures adopted so far have been the establishment of administrative commissions of inquiry into the conflicts[1]; the creation of autonomous ethnic regions (states and local governments) for the ethnic regions where such creation would reduce the ethnic advantage of others (considered as opponents) and, or, advance the ethnic interests of the creators of the autonomous ethnic regions[2]; the entrenchment of the "federal character principle" in the constitutions of the country under the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy[3]; sending of

military expeditions to the ethnic regions in conflict to give military solutions to the conflicts[4]; and zoning certain key political posts to certain ethnic nationalities and, or, ethnic regions in the country[5].

Ethnic conflicts wherever they occur leave scars and tales of woes. Unimaginable and unquantifiable losses in men and materials are left behind; and fears are created in the minds of the peoples over human integrity and honour; and doubts are cast over the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria as a country. The greatest of the losses is the loss of the goodwill of your friends and neighbours from other ethnic regions or religious divide and even from one's ethnic region with whom one had lived with, grown with, dined with, inter-married with, which is lost in a day through ethno-religious conflicts as these neighbours and friends are the ones to identify, attack and kill during such conflicts instead of protecting. This study therefore examines the costs of these ethnic conflicts in terms of capital and human flights from the regions and the impacts of these costs on the socio-economic development of the region and on national unity and integration.

Statement of Problem

There is the saying that when wealth is lost nothing is lost but when health is lost all is lost. This goes to explain the pains and agonies that accompany each ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria because both wealth and health are lost wherever they occur. The accompanying losses make people to lose faith in their fellow citizens as their brother's keepers; and the misdeeds received at the hands of those one trusted and loved so much, who could have protected one and keep one safe and well in times of crises turn men to question their personal and group identities within the polity. Each ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria sends so many people fleeing from their homes and to lose all their material possession within the twinkle of an eye. Some flee never to return again while some other survivors come back to start life all over again from the scratch having lost all their lives' possessions. It is the purpose of this study to evaluate the costs of these ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria to the victims and economies of the areas in which they occur, and their impacts to national unity and integration. To do this the following questions are raised and addressed: to what extent have ethno-religious conflicts influenced human and capital flights from the affected regions to other regions in the country? What are the costs to the socio-economic development of the affected areas or regions? What are the costs of the crises on the political development of the country especially to national unity and integration? What should be done to avert some of these crises and the attendant human and capital flights that accompany the crises to enhance the socio-economic development of the country and enhance national unity and integration? Ethnic violence leads to human flights from the affected regions or areas and the human flights are accompanied by losses in human capital and capital flights from the regions.

Theoretical Framework

Scholars have expressed diverse views about the roles of conflicts in societies. Some see conflict as part of human nature and therefore constructive while others see it otherwise and therefore destructive. The constructive perspectives see conflicts in societies as sources of social change and development in that the conflicts stimulate creativity; destroy old orders and civilizations to pave way for new ones to develop from their ruins (Spencer, 1982; Eisenstadt, 1970; Webber, 1958; and Rostow, 1956). For Tunde and Adekunle (2012) conflicts raise deep seated emotions and non-rational arguments and by so doing diffuse long-standing tensions. The destructive perspective sees conflicts as basically instrumental to inflicting injuries on others and neutralizing and subverting the action plans of opponents. As Tunde and Adekunle (2012) also observed, the two perspectives do not agree on the nature, causes and impacts of

conflicts in a society and the methods of resolving them and therefore present different perspectives of the same issue.

For this study, the marxist and neo-marxist orientations will be adopted as frameworks for analysis. The marxists and neo-marxists see conflicts in societies as emanating from the competition for resource control among classes and groups in the society. The social organization of the society creates classes in the society and in the process of group and class social interaction in the society some classes and groups exclude others from holding and or, having access to political and economic resources of the society. This exclusion creates feelings of anger and frustration, poverty, alienation, exploitation and domination in the excluded groups and classes, and a general loss of individual and group identities. These invariably lead to conflicts in the society to redress the anomalies by specific and identifiable classes and or groups. This struggle for relevance and recognition by the marginalized groups or classes will always lead to conflicts and violence against the group that hold and monopolizes the resources or privileged positions in the society. As these conflicts take group and class identities of ethnicity and or religion; the crises take diverse dimensions that leave tales of woes, destruction and exodus by some groups and classes from the society.

A Brief Introduction of Wukari and Her Jokuns

The modern day Wukari is located in the guinea savannah of the middle belt region of Nigeria. Geographically, it is located between latitude 7.5^o N and 9.5^o N; and longitude 10^oE and 12^oE. it is bounded in the north by Gombe State; in the south by Kastina-Ala (Benue State); in the east by Adamawa State and in the west by Nasarawa (Nasarawa State). Wukari is dissected by by the River Benue and has many smaller rivers as Ease, Shemankar, and Ankwe Rivers on the right hand side; and the Taraba, Donga< Bantaje and Suntai Rivers on the left hand side all flowing into the Benue River. The city has good climatic conditions and rich agricultural soil (Zekeriya Abubakar, 2007).

The main economic activities of the people are fishing, pottery, hunting, blacksmithing and textiles. Local minerals are also processed in the region especially salt, antimony, iron ore, gold, silver, lead and copper (Zekeriya Abubakar, 2007). Trading activities are also carried out in the region by migrant settlers as the Hausa/Fulani groups, and migrant traders as the Ibos.

The traditional inhabitants of the region are the Jokuns. The origin of the Jokuns is not very clear and so also is their state building processes riddles with disagreements and controversies (Zekeriya Abubarkar, 2007). But stories has it that they migrated from outside the present day Nigeria and settled in the Gongola basin first, before being found in their present day location.

The state building process of the Jokun kingdom or the Kwararafa Kingdom[6] (Ayuba, 2012) is not very clear but there are claims that they migrated from Sudan (Pulmer, 1926), an assertion which Uhweinya (1986) claims cannot be proved as peole then claimed descent with known and long established kingdoms, rulers and warriors. It is on records that the Jokuns organized attacks on other ethnic groups in the present day Kano, Kastina, and Zauzau in the early 18th century. These attacks were neither for territorial expansion nor for empire building as Sa'ad Abubakar (1980) pointed out, but were raids for material acquisition. Thus the Jokuns were warriors of fortune. But this military brevity among the Jokuns was lost due to internal contradictions in the Jokun society mostly due to succession to the Aku Uka throne (Zekeriya Abubakar, 2007). The collapse of military raids and expeditions made the Jokuns to retire to living in their previous positions of independent communities, having migrated southwards towards the Benue Basin with Wukari as its base or headquarter under the leadership of the Aku Uka, Aku Katakpa at about 1660 A. D. (Zekeriya Abubarkar, 2007);

Counting the Costs: Ethnic Violence Versus Human and Capital Flight
From Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria

125

though other sources say that Wukari was established at about 1830 by Aku Uka Angyu Katakpa (Akinwumi and Joseph, 1996) the Jokun kingdom is reputed to have covered parts of south-eastern geo-political of Nigeria; the present Cross River State of Nigeria; Borno State, Kogi State especially the present Igala Kingdom; Zaria and Bauchi. These are speculations that really need to be established through proper researches.

The Jokuns have their traditional religious practices, the Ayoku. The religion is a form of ancestral worship and is seriously preserved by the people irrespective of the entry of Islam and Christianity into the region. And the tenets of this religion is passed onto the younger generations of the Jokuns, and the tenets of the Ayoku religion are observed by both the traditional worshippers and most Christain Jokuns and this has been responsible for their passive attitude towards Moslems in the region who have no respect for the practitioners of the religion.

The Jokuns and Islam

The entry of Islam into Wukari was as a result of trade with its northern neighbours especially the Hausas, Fulanis, and the Kanuris which brought about the settlement of some Hausa/Fulani and Kanuri Moslems traders in the region, and these settler elements were referred to as "Abakwariga" by the Jokuns. Banfa (1978) described the Abakwarigas as descendants of Hausa pagans and went on to say that "Abakwariga is a term usually associated with non-muslim Hausas in Jokun land before their islamization. But (Zekeriya Abubarkar (2007) see the term as referring to both Islamized and un-islamized Hausas in Jokun land because the Hausas had been islamized before the 17th century and their entry into Jokun land.

The Hausa traders were later accompanied into the Jokun Kingdom by Islamic scholars who came for evangelisation. Notable among such scholars were Mallam Sambo and Mallam Dikko (Zekeriya Abubarkar, 2007). These scholars in the course of evangelization settled in many locations within the Jokun land – Wukari, Takum, Ibi, Bantaje, Donga, Gindiri, and Dorowa. Because they did not challenge the traditional Jokun religion openly, they were respected and admitted into the Aku UKa's court as advisers. The Kanuri community in Wukari for instance had a representative called Zanuwa in the Aku Uka's Palace and is recognised by the Wukari Tradiitonal Council (Zekeriya Abubarkar, 2007). Islam was therefore solely practised by these settler elements and spread through the Jokun Kingdom through inter-marriages with the Jokuns. Though the jihad of Usman dan Fodio was to purify the practise of Islam in the north, the jihad did not get as far as the Jokun Kingdom and a jihad by Buba Yaroof Gombe over the middle belt region was concerned with the consolidation of Islam among the indigenous peoples whose original religion was not Islam and whose rulers were not Moslems, including the Aku Uka of Wukari (Zekeriya Abubarkar, 2007). The inability of the Moslems to successfully do this within the Jokun Kingdom may have been responsible for their disrespect for the Jokun traditional practices which has been a great source of crises and conflicts between the Jokuns and the "Moslems" in contemporary times.

The Jokuns and Christains

Christianity was introduced by the London based Christian association- the Sudan United Movement and had the London address of: 32 Fleet Street, London E. C. H. with its Nigerian headquarter at Ibi (Zekeriya Abubarkar, 2007). The Church Missionary Society (CMS) also came to Wukari. The aims of these Christian organizations were to stop slavery, promote legitimate trade, sign treaties with African Chiefs and convert the natives into Christians. They established model farms and schools, and engaged in aggressive evangelisation of the peoples and counteracted the

spread of Islamic religion in the area (Boer, 1979).

The branch of the CMS in Nasarawa town was forced by the Emir of Nasarawa to move down to Wukari as the Emir never wanted his people to be converted to Christianity. Christianity got converts from Jokun land through the establishment of schools and hospitals in the region; but Islam and Christianity failed to eradicate traditional Jokun religion (Zekeriya Abubarkar, 2007).

The 2013 Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Wukari

The 2013 crises in Wukari qualify so much as ethno-religious conflicts because the first and second conflicts were between the members of an ethnic nationality – the Jokuns and those of a religious sect – the Moslems. Jokun is an ethnic identity whereas Moslem is a religious identity. There are Jokun Moslems as well as Hausa/ Fulani Moslems and others from other ethnic nationalities that profess the Islamic faith resident in the city.

The settler Hausa/ Fulanis/ Kanuri migrant settlers (the Abakwarigas) on entry into the city got married to Jokun women and settled permanently in Jokun land. The Nigerian society being patrilineal, Jokun citizenship cannot be extended or conferred on the offsprings of such marriages, though they were accommodated by the Jokuns through the allotment of portions of land for settlement. With the passage of time, most of these offsprings of such marriages could not trace their ancestry to anywhere in the adjoining northern states and cities. This fact created a crisis of identity for them. Since they are neither Jokuns by identity nor any other ethnic nationality, they carved out an identity for themselves – they became Muslims. Jokun is an ethnic identity whereas Muslim is a religious identity. The assumption of a religious identity keeps them uncomfortable in Jokun land and makes them resent the Jokuns. The failure of the Muslims in Jokun land to have a sense of ethnic identity made them to resent and disrespect the Jokun traditional religious worshippers and Jokun Christians, disrespect and desecrate Jokun traditional religious and political institutions and to hold the non-Muslims in Jokun land to disdain. The fact that they were given settlements in Jokun land, recognized and admitted into the Traditional Council of Wukari by the Aku Uka based on the good conduct of their forefathers was not sufficient. Given the opportunity, they would want to have an Emir of Wukari in the same kingdom as the Aku Uka. The loss of Jokun citizenship and the resultant crisis of identity was enough reason for them to be violent and aggressive and to magnify any little conflict that would have been settled by dialogue to take ethno-religious colouration.

Inter-tribal marriages have always been adopted as a means of societal integration. The Fulanis after the invasion of the Hausa kingdoms used it to integrate themselves into the Hausas. But this phenomenon did not work out well in the case of the Jokuns and their northern migrant settlers. Whereas the traditional religion practitioners and Christians of Jokuns origin would allow their daughter to be married to a Muslim migrant settler in Jokun land, the Muslims either of migrant settler or the Jokun extract would not allow a marriage between their daughters and Jokun traditional religion worshippers or Jokun Christians. For a Muslim, it is a taboo for their daughters to marry a non-Muslim but the Muslims would marry non-Muslims. This affected the integration of the migrant settler Muslims into the Jokun society and this non-integration was another source of loss of ethnic identity and ethno-religious cleavages in the Jokun society.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a means of power acquisition in the West African sub-region has fuelled Islamic fundamental feelings and attitudes among the Abakwarigas in Jokun land. This feeling must be checkmated by the Jokun Christians and traditional religion worshippers at all costs. The two bloody conflicts that took place in Wukari early 2013 are said to be in response to Islamic fundamentalism among the Muslims in Wukari and the adjoining cities.

Counting the Costs: Ethnic Violence Versus Human and Capital Flight
From Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria

127

Yam and fish are very important agricultural products of the Jokuns. The formation of trade cartels on these commodities by the Abakwarigas at the exclusion of the indigenous Jokun population became a source of great concern to the Jokuns. The natives must have a say on issues of trade and commerce in their land. The desire to get a share of the business from the migrant settlers or the Abakwarigas became another source of conflict in the city of Wukari.

The domination of minority ethnic groups by the Hausa/Fulani group in what used to be the former Northern Region in Nigeria has been an issue leading the minority ethnic nationalities in the region to declare their local autonomies. The domination of the Hausa/Fulani over the Jokuns gave the Abakwarigas influence to dominate the local Jokun population. Hausa language became the official means of communication at the expense of the indigenous Jokun language. Jokun enclaves and settlements bore Hausa/Fulani names, the local chiefs bore Hausa/Fulani titles and the Jokuns lost their indigenous identity. The rediscovery of their national identity by the Jokuns causes resentment for the Abakwarigas and the entire Hausa/Fulani ethnic group; Islam as a religion and its practitioners. This resentment manifests as ethno-religious conflict once there is a skirmish between a Jokun and a Muslim.

These identified factor created a culture of mutual disrespect for the Jokuns and the Muslims; and the Muslims disrespect of Jokun traditional religious practises, Jokun Christians, and disrespect for constituted authorities in Jokun land especially disrespect for the Aku Uka and Wukkari Traditiona Council, Jokun traditional religion and disrespect for the entire Jokun customs and traditions. The disrespect must be put to an end thus, whenever they occur, retaliatory measures are taken immediately to redress the situation and these precipitate as ethno-religious conflicts.

Counting the Costs of these Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Wukari

Ethno-Religious Conflicts Lead to Loss of Ethnic Identities by Migrant Settlers

The first cost is the loss of ethnic identity by the offsprings of the Abakwarigas and all other migrant settlers in Jokun land. Brotherhood and belongingness is defined by fatherhood and not motherhood. The loss of the affection of one's mother and maternal uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews is highly painful and unbearable. This creates identity crises which affects social integration and peace in the society. Having lost this affection, the migrant settlers lost everything and will find it difficult to regain them again.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts Lead to Brain Drain from the Areas Involved in the Conflicts

Secondly, there has been an emigration of most of the Abakwarigas and other migrant settlers from Jokun land to other regions, especially the settler Ibo businessmen, traders, craftsmen and civil servants. The services rendered by such people are lost and so are their contributions to the social and economic development of their host communities. The indigenous population are now faced with the problems of sourcing the services rendered by these people elsewhere, and or, forced to perform these jobs themselves; and most often they do without the services provided by the departing migrant settlers. This cannot develop a society.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts Lead to the Destruction of Lives and Property and Pauperization of the People

Thirdly, the socially mobilized educated and illiterate minorities whom Nnoli (1989) has called "middlemen minorities" who took advantage of the unification of the various ethnic nationalities into a country called Nigeria to venture out of their ethnic regions for business ventures become targets of attacks. This is particularly true of the Ibo ethnic group in Nigeria. In their host ethnic regions, they became ethnic minorities and targets of all forms of

ethno-religious conflicts. In the Jokun society they have become targets of motivated attacks by both the indigenous Jokun population and the migrant Muslim settlers because of their business acumen. Their shops and houses are looted before being set ablaze during riots and those of them that could not get to safety are killed in the crises. Those who escaped immigrate to more quiet northern cities to start life afresh or go home with tales of woes. As they leave, they leave with their resources – capital that would have gone into the development of their host communities.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts Retard Infrastructural Development in the Societies Involved

No society, town or city ever develops through the efforts of its indigenes alone. Funds from non-indigenes are needed in the local economy for its development. No one builds or settles down in a region rife with conflicts and uncertainties. As the migrant settlers leave the towns, they do so with their funds, with their work experiences, and with their ideas. All bonds of unity built over the years are lost, the friendships and fraternity are severed, trusts and confidences are betrayed and broken due to ethno-religious conflicts. This makes the task of national unity and integration an uphill task because prejudices are being reinforced through the conflicts. In some cases, retaliatory actions are taken against non-indigenes in otherwise peaceful societies when corpses of slain relatives are returned, as people tell their tales of woes and losses at the hands of their fellow country men in the northern parts of the country.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts Impede National Integration

According to Weiner (1965), integration refers to the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. Integration as used in this context assumes the existence of an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterised by its own language, religion, arts, and other self-conscious cultural qualities. National integration therefore refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality, which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties.

Secondly, Weiner (1965) sees the concept as establishing a national central authority over sub-ordinate political units or regions, which may or may not coincide with distinct cultural or social groups. Thus, it has to do with the subjective feelings which individuals belonging to different political units have towards the nation. National integration therefore refers to the objective control which the central authority has over the entire territory under its claim of jurisdiction.

Thirdly, the concept refers to the problem of linking the people (the ruled) with the government (the rulers). What is implied here is the existence of gap between the government and the people. This gap could be shown in the form of disparity in aspirations and values between the ruling elites and the masses. This of course leads to the disintegration of the society if this gap cannot be peacefully bridged by the ruling elites. An instance is where Nigerians are asking for more fuel for their vehicles while the minister recommends bicycle for them as means of transportation.

Fourthly, the concept is used to show the minimum value consensus necessary to maintain a social order. These may be values concerning justice, equity, the desirability of economic development as a goal, the sharing of common history and symbols, and in general, an agreement as to what constitutes desirable and undesirable social ends. The value may also centre on means, that is, on the instrumentalities and procedures for the achievement of goals and for resolving conflicts. Here, the problem is with the legal norms, the legitimacy of the constitutional framework, and the means by which it should operate. It centres on desirable and undesirable conduct.

Counting the Costs: Ethnic Violence Versus Human and Capital Flight
From Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria

129

Finally, there is the need of an integrated behaviour among the people of the political system or the capacity of the people to organise for a common purpose. But a cooperative behaviour cannot be possible in a social system if certain sections of the system feel marginalised or are actually marginalised by the rest or by some groups. These incessant ethno-religious conflicts in the country make national integration an uphill task as the conflicts are aimed at the declaration of local identities and autonomies from perceived (real or imaginary) dominating ethnic nationalities. Since the declaration of such autonomy is done militarily, wounds are inflicted in the process. And when the wounds are healed, the scars remain.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts Impede the Cultivation of a Sense of National Identity

National identity on the other hand refers to the felling of attachment an individual has to his or her country, its government and people. It is the individual's identification with the political system. It is a feeling of not being marginalised in the scheme of things. A sense of national identity starts with the individual asking himself questions and answering them. These questions are: What is my nation? What kind of nation is it? Do I really belong to it? How deep or ambiguous is this sense of belonging?.

According to Verba (1968), national identity has to do with the peoples' belief that they really are members of a particular society, that is, the extent to which they consider themselves as members of the nation-state. National identity does not really deal merely with the individual's physical location of himself in a particular place, but includes self identity – a psychological attachment. It is only when one lives within a state and has the feeling or sense of belonging to it that one can rightly say that one has a sense of national identity.

Verba (1968) Distinguished Two Kinds of Identity in His Discussion of National Identity

- Vertical identification which deals with the individual's sense of attachment to his political unit – the country, the state, local government, the village, and the governments at these levels; and for the symbols of the government or the state.

- Horizontal identification which deals with the individual's sense of integration and identification with other people who inhabit the political system. It deals with the extent to which the individuals identify with each other as members of the same society; and also the extent to which they have trust and confidence in their fellow citizens.

In Nigeria, lack of national identity is caused by ethnic and cultural differences which have made most ethnic groups not to submit themselves to be ruled by men of other ethnic nationalities, races or religion because they believe that doing so implies submitting to oppression, degradation and exclusion from the moral community as inferior groups or persons whose opinions, attitudes and values do not count.

In places where politics involves a high level of antagonism among groups with opposing political views as Nigeria, there is the likelihood that there would be very bad impression of trustworthiness of individuals when they are considered in political terms. Sense of confidence in others is very important for the maintenance of stable political system. Unless individuals trust their fellow citizens, irrespective of their ethnic group affiliations, they would be unwilling to turn over political power to members of other ethnic nationalities in the country. The Hausa/Fulani ethnic nationality in Nigeria regrets today for having done that – allowing the power base of the nation to shift to the west and to the south-south

geo-political zones of the country. When there is a sense of trust and confidence among the people, they would engage in peaceful competition with those of opposing political view and allow the alternation of power among competing groups and elites unless the dangers of such competition and alternation of power is too great for the ruling group to bear. This was one of the reasons for the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential Election in Nigeria by General Ibrahim Babangida military administration; and the present northern opposition to the Goodluck Jonathan's led Federal Government in Nigeria today.

Sense of confidence in others is very important because if there is general lack of confidence and trust in the ruler and non-identification with the government of the day, the rulers will have to get obedience to their wishes by force even if such force is destabilizing. When this happens in a state, it would be very difficult if not impossible to develop a sense of identification or national identity.

In Nigeria the formation of a sense of national identity has been an up-hill task because it involves the alteration of primordial loyalties and rapid development of political consciousness among a politically unconscious people. Often this alteration creates ethnic cleavages between the various ethnic groups. This leads to national symbols to vie with local or tribal symbols. This also leads to divided loyalties and loyalty to sub-national units becomes primary. This problem becomes more acute when national boundaries are defined by ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural boundaries as is the case with Nigerians.

Since the creation of this sense of national identity is being championed by the ruling elites of the various groups in the country, the sense of national identity by the members of the various groups becomes bi-focal (Verba, 1968).

- It focuses on the personality of the charismatic leaders;

- It focuses on emotionally charged symbols

And when these happen, the sense of national identity thus created is fragile, rejected on the onset, and fades when the symbols and personalities are no longer there. Personality crises result from the vacuum thus created by the exit of the personalities. In Nigeria, since colonial days till date, this sense of national identity has been more or less focused on the personalities of the ruling elites of the various ethnic groups as they serve more or less as symbols of unity and integration.

Finally the call for the development of a sense of national identity creates a feeling of lack of self-confidence or self-esteem on the people that have not developed it because they are uncertain of their national boundaries – who are part of them and who are not. They ask themselves the question: "are we members of the same society? "Why don't they do like us?" They do not comprehend the meaning of national identity as such they ask themselves the questions: "what do they want from us?" "Why must we abandon our old ways of doing things?" "Why must we cooperate with them?" "Have they been cooperating with us?" "We can get along alone, why can't they stay on their own and leave us alone?"

The people do not know the scope of their identity hence they ask the questions: "what is expected of us?" "What shall we get in return?" "For how long will it last?" "What shall we do if we are not comfortable in this arrangement?" "To what extent shall we agree to be one?" It is because the various ethnic groups in Nigeria do not have ready and convincing answers to these questions that the nation is still unintergrated and parts of the questions have come

Counting the Costs: Ethnic Violence Versus Human and Capital Flight
From Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria

131

to the fore in the forms of the application of the Sharia law in some states; the cry for resource control by some states; the call for sovereign national conference by various ethnic nationalities in the country.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts Impede Democratic Governance

With this cyclical nature of ethno religious conflicts, it would be extremely difficult for the government to effectively rule the country, maintain its authority and apply rules and regulations within the country. The legitimacy of the regime would be questioned by some of the people and groups. Secondly, the citizens of the country cannot unite for a common purpose, face a common enemy or solve a national problem collectively. Development programmes in the country would not be planned and coordinated because the citizens do not see themselves as a people with a common goal and destiny. Thirdly, ethnic sentiments are strong in the country because of the lack of national identity. Thus, there is always the tendency for local groups to assert their local independence and exhibit secessionist tendencies as has been the case with the eastern states of the country – the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB); and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MASOP); etc.

As national identity is lacking, the attempts by the ruling groups to establish a strong central government often provokes ethnic sentiments that call to question the legitimacy and authority of the government. The declaration of state of emergency in some states in the north-east geo-political zone in Nigeria due to the Boko Haram insurgency testifies to this. The absence of national identity weakens the governmental structures and institutions thereby creating national crises and political instability. Lack of national identity has caused some governments in the country (federal, state and local) to be detached from the people, acting by themselves and for themselves. In Nigeria, the crises within the political process arise because people are not interested in the actions of the government rather they are interested in who is the occupant of the seats of power. This has made governance to become an avenue for personal enrichment because the people do not give the necessary supports to it, or question the rationale for certain national policies and actions. It is only when people have a sense of belonging to a nation that the survival of the political system is possible. It is only then that the country can survive any type of crisis. A sense of national identity restrains the emergence of totalitarian regimes because everyone is interested in the affairs of the state and the methods of their conduct.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Each ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria sends so many people fleeing from their homes and to loss of material possessions. Survivors flee from the areas never to return again while some others come back to start life all over again having lost all their lives' possessions. All such exoduses are accompanied by human capital flights and material capital flights that would have gone into development investments in the affected areas. This paper also examined these conflicts and their costs to the victims and economies of the areas in which they occur, and found out that these conflicts lead to losses of assumed ethnic identities by migrant settlers and this goes to redefine citizenship; it leads to losses of lives and property; pauperization of the people; retards infrastructural development in the regions involved in the conflicts and impedes national integration and the cultivation of a sense of national identity. Finally it endangers democratic governance.

The paper also found out that the various ethno-religious conflicts in the country especially in the north-east and the north-central geopolitical zones in Nigeria are caused by crises of identity on the parts of the migrant settler populations who lack ethnic identities and therefore adopt religious identities in their areas of domicile; and that the crises would continue in all regions in the north with indigenous ethnic minorities until the ethnic minorities disengage

themselves from the domination of the migrant settler populations.

The paper recommends that the end to these ethno-religious conflicts lies in the abandonment of religious extremism and approval of inter-religious marriages between members of the various religious faiths in the country; and a stop to challenging indigenous customary and traditional practices that are neither criminal nor sinful in nature. Secondly, migrant settlers should have respect for constituted traditional authorities in their areas of domicile and should stop vying for traditional and political positions in their areas of domicile if the areas have qualified natural indigenes that are capable of occupying such traditional and political positions. This last point may cause some disenchantment amongst some sections of the Nigerian population but the facts are clear that this particular issue has been and will continue to be a source of ethno-religious conflicts across Nigeria. It does not in any way redefine citizenship but rather goes to recognise citizenship as defined by the nation's constitution[7].

For Nigeria to be integrated to the extent that the citizens would have a sense of national identity, the federal government should take very seriously the call by the various ethnic groups for the convocation of a sovereign national conference. This conference among other things allow the various ethnic nationalities to voice out their hopes, aspirations and fears in the corporate existence of Nigeria and agree on how all the ethnic nationalities will co-exist peacefully and have the true feelings and sense of national identity.

This sovereign national conference will also discuss the "national question". The cries for resource control by the various ethnic nationalities go to buttress the need for the discussion of the national question by the various ethnic groups in the country. It is believed that the problems, injustices and inequity associated with the authoritative allocation of resources in Nigeria can be solved through the discussion of the national question.

The vast majority of the citizens of this country have always reduced the national question to contradictions and antagonism between the various ethnic nationalities in the country. In order words, they see the national question in terms of inter-tribal hostilities only. But the national question is far bigger and more complex than this. The national question is big complex of political, economic, ideological, legal and other problems that arise during a people's struggle for liberation and for favourable internal and external conditions for further development; and also in the course of establishing equal, friendly relations between peoples. As Ismagilova (1978) pointed out, the national question includes the abolition of all forms of ethnic oppression and ethnic inequality. It involves the establishment of real equality, friendship, and fraternal cooperation between peoples. It aims at the abolition of the exploitation of a region by the other. This must be discussed to bring about equity and justice in the allocation of the nation's resources to create the sense of belonging on the peoples of the country and to foster national integration.

It is only when the various groups and peoples in the country are involved in the formulation of governmental policies and their implementation, get a fair share of the nation's resources, and are not considered as peoples whose values, opinions and feelings do not matter in the country that they can cultivate the necessary sense of belonging and identity with their fellow citizens and the governments at all levels; and work in unity toward the building of a united and strong nation-state of which all will be proud to belong.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Notes

- The colonial government instituted the Sir Henry Willink's Minority Commission on September 27, 1957 to investigate the complaints of the various ethnic minorities in the then three geo-political zones that formed the country – the Eastern, Northern and Western Regions. These three geo-political zones were the federating units in the formation of the Nigerian federation.

- The pattern of state creation in Nigeria has been based on political considerations rather than the need for the development of the regions. They have always been created to favour the creators (military generals and their civilian cohorts) who happen to be within the corridors of power in the country within those periods.

- See the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy of Nigeria in the various indigenous Nigerian constitutions (1979, 1989, 1999 Constitutions).

- General Olusegun Obasanjo as a civilian Head of State (1999-2007) sent military expeditions to Odi, Bayelsa State; and Zongon-Kataff, Kaduna State to quell ethnic crises through military might.

- The zoning system was introduced in Nigeria's political process by the National Party of Nigeria in 1979 as winning strategy and was abused by the northern members of the party in 1983 when the western and eastern regional members of the party wanted to invoke the principle for either of them to produce the next presidential candidate for the party for the 1983 presidential election. The crises of confidence generated by the issue among the ruling elite was in part why the military under the leadership of General Buhari took over political power in 1983. The coup was part of the Northern scheme to hold perpetually onto power in the country. So also were the other coups designed to work to the Hausa/Fulani advantage and cling onto political power.

- Ayuba's account of the concept of "Kwararfa" makes the concept clearer. It first arose as a trade cartel to protect salt producers and marketers, the Jokun rain makers, and the Hausa-speaking Abakwariga salt merchants within the Middle Belt region against the encroachment of the disruptive forces of the Hausa/Fulani Kingdoms and the British intrusion and disruption of the trade rather than a state building process. The unity among the cartel members somehow metamorphosed the cartel into what became the Kwararfa Kingdom, though the kingdom was an amorphous entity. This really explains the constant raids on the adjoining regions by the Jokuns, - an indirect way of protecting the cartel and keeping away intruders.

- Chapter III, Section 25 (1) (a) of the Nigerian Constitution (1999) defined a Nigerian citizen as one born in Nigeria before the date of independence (October 1, 1960), either of whose parents or any of whose parents belongs to a community indigenous to Nigeria. But citizenship in Nigeria is traced by descent to a male family and this makes Nigeria a patrilineal society and not matrilineal society. A migrant settler has an indigenous community and his offsprings should be able to trace their descent to that community as citizens of the community. Adoption of religious identities rather than ethnic identities compound the issues of ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria.

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From Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria

135

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